



## Public Forum Debate Lesson Plans

This is a suggested set of lesson plans that you could use to introduce your students to Public Forum (PF) Debate. This is by no means an authoritative source on how to teach your students. Additionally, there may be things you want to add to this unit, delete, etc. It's a resource that you can utilize to best fits your needs.

The unit has 10 lesson plans, which cover topics ranging from understanding the nuts and bolts of PF to argument and case construction to the ability to keep track of arguments by debaters during the round. Here is the outline of lessons:

- Lesson 1: Introduction to Public Forum
- Lesson 2: Structure of the Round
- Lesson 3: Argumentation
- Lesson 4: Research
- Lesson 5: Casing
- Lesson 6: Flowing
- Lesson 7: Refutation
- Lesson 8: Delivery
- Lesson 9: Crossfire Strategies and Practice Debates
- Lesson 10: Argument Comparison and Issue Selection

If you have materials you would like to share, do not hesitate to contact Steve Schappaugh ([steve.schappaugh@speechanddebate.org](mailto:steve.schappaugh@speechanddebate.org)).

Special thanks to Michelle Keohane, of the Schuler Scholar Program, for her work in designing these lesson plans.

Enjoy!

## Lesson Plan #1

**Unit Name:** Public Forum Debate

**Topic:** Introduction to Public Forum

### **Essential Questions:**

1. What is Public Forum debate?
2. What does a good Public Forum debate look like?
3. How do you determine who wins a debate?

### **Objectives:**

1. Students will understand the basics of Public Forum debate.
2. Students will see an example of excellent debate.
3. Students will reason through the process of deciding a winner in a debate.

**Instructional Materials Needed:** Video of a public forum debate, projector or television to play the video with sound, copy of Public Forum debate ballot for each student, white board

### **Overview of Lesson:**

- Mini-lecture: Introduction to Public Forum
- Watch demonstration debate
- Individual activity: Write reason for decision

### **Detailed Step-by-Step Lesson:**

Introduction to Public Forum (5 min.)

- Hand out the Public Forum debate ballot to students and ask them to follow along with the instructions.
- Debaters compete in pairs
- Debaters are given a topic or resolution in advance and asked to prepare to debate both sides of it. This includes pre-writing a four minute speech for each side called a case.
- Immediately before the round, the two teams who are about to debate participate in a coin flip. The winning team can choose either which side of the resolution they want to defend (pro or con), or which speaker position they would like (first or second). The team that lost

the flip then gets to choose the other. For example, if Team A win the coin flip and choose to defend the pro side, Team B will be con, but will get to choose to speak first or second.

- Each debater will give two speeches supporting their side of the resolution that follow certain time limits, which we will cover in the next class. Each team will also have three different opportunities to ask the other team questions during **crossfire**, which is an important time to clarify information and try to undermine their opponent's arguments.
- Debates are judged by "laypeople," which means you don't need any special experience or knowledge to be able to evaluate the round. The debaters' goal is to be able to persuade any person off the street that their side of the resolution is correct.
- Since debaters are expected to be able to debate both sides, and they often can't choose which side they get to defend, the judge has to put aside their personal opinion on the topic and evaluate only the points that are brought up by the debaters.
- Give students the resolution for the demonstration debate and ask them to write it down. Let them know that after the debate, they will have to turn in a reason for decision or RFD--a paragraph explaining who they would vote for in the debate and at least three reasons why they believe that team won the round. Encourage students to jot down notes on the back of the ballot during the round to help them remember each debater's points so that they can make an informed decision. Students should record the content of the speeches and also jot down any impressions about the debaters' delivery--what they say, and how they say it. Note that they will learn a formalized method of notetaking later in the unit.
- Let students know that by the end of the unit, they will be doing Public Forum debates of their own, so they should pay close attention to the student experts in the demonstration.
- On the board, fill out the information at the top of the ballot with the names of the competitors in the demonstration debate.

Watch demonstration debate (40 min.)

- If it would be helpful for your students, consider pausing the video after each speech or each crossfire and ask students to review the main points of each speech.

Individual activity: Write reason for decision(5-10 min.)

Each student should turn in their RFD at the end of class.

**Informal Assessment Strategies:** Observing or questioning students during the debate round

**Formal Assessment Strategies:** RFDs: Read and evaluate students' reasons for decision. An excellent RFD should use specific details from the debate to drive the evaluation, and name strengths for the winning team in both content and delivery. Since the students haven't evaluated a debate before, look most closely at whether their RFD shows that they were paying close attention to the debate and had some rationale for their decision.

**Reflection/Review for Future:**

The demonstration debate will be a touchstone for the rest of the unit. For students, this is an example of great debating. For teachers, you may reference the debate as an example of good argumentation, strategy, and delivery during future lessons.



## Lesson Plan #2

**Unit Name:** Public Forum Debate

**Topic:** Structure of the Round

### **Essential Questions:**

1. Why did you make the decision you did in the demonstration debate?
2. What qualities make a good debater?
3. What is the purpose of each speech in the debate?

### **Objectives:**

1. Students will explore multiple perspectives on the debate through their reasons for decision.
2. Students will understand what they need to accomplish in each speech.
3. Students will generate a list of the qualities they see in good debaters.

**Instructional Materials Needed:** Students' RFDs from last class, speech-by-speech worksheet, white board

### **Overview of Lesson:**

- Break-out groups: Debrief demonstration round
- Class discussion: Purpose of each speech
- Mini-lecture: Structure of the round
- Class discussion: Resolutional analysis

### **Detailed Step-by-Step Lesson:**

Before students arrive/ as they enter:

- Write a tally of how many students voted for each team in the demonstration debate.
- Hand back students' RFDs.

Break-out groups: Debrief demonstration round (20 min.)

Break students into pairs and ask them to discuss the process of making a decision (5 min.)

- Is there anywhere you got stuck?

- If you could ask any of the debaters a question that would help you make your decision, what would it be?
- What is one thing you wish was clearer in the debate or in your notes that would have helped you decide?

Ask each pair to share out one observation from their discussion. (5 min.)

As a class, discuss the reasons for decision. (10 min.)

- Let students know that there were good reasons to vote for both teams.
- Solicit the different reasons students voted for either the pro or the con. If you think some students may be uncomfortable feeling like they made the “wrong” decision, you can solicit comments without asking a student to reveal how they voted, i.e. “who can give me one reason why you might have voted for the pro team?” regardless of their personal decision.
- Generate a list on the board of reasons to vote for each team. Ask students to copy the reasons into their notes.
- Star the points on the lists that refer to a quality of a good debater rather than a specific argument made in the round. This will become a list of traits for students to emulate (i.e. clear speaking, emphasizing their points, etc.).
- Direct the discussion to hone in on points of contrast. How did students view the most important arguments differently? Why did some find one team’s analysis compelling while others did not?

Class discussion: Purpose of each speech (20 min.)

Ask students what each team should seek to accomplish by the end of the debate. Responses should revolve around ensuring that the judge clearly understands their arguments, refuting responses to their arguments, taking down their opponents’ arguments. These three objectives should therefore all be achieved during the Final Focus, the last speech of the round. Guide the students in working backwards to brainstorm the purpose of each speech. Suggested responses are included on the teacher’s key worksheet, but feel free to include other student suggestions not included on the sheet if they seem helpful.

Mini-lecture: Structure of the round (10 min.)

Copy the order of the speeches onto the board and have students copy into their notes. (Another option would be to create a hand-out with this information, but it may be beneficial for students to have to write it out themselves to help it stick.) This will be a reference for them during their debates.

Speech times

Speaker 1 Constructive (Team A, 1st speaker ): 4 min.

Speaker 2 Constructive (Team B, 1st speaker): 4 min.

Speakers 1 and 2 Crossfire: 3 min.

Speaker 3 Rebuttal (Team A, 2nd speaker): 4 min.

Speaker 4 Rebuttal (Team B, 2nd speaker): 4 min.

Speakers 3 and 4 Crossfire: 3 min.

Speaker 1 Summary: 2 min.

Speaker 2 Summary: 2 min.

Grand Crossfire (all speakers): 3 min.

Speaker 3 Final Focus: 2 min.

Speaker 4 Final Focus: 2 min.

Note that each team has 2 min. of prep time to be shared between both teammates. It can be used at any point in the debate before a team member is about to speak. Occasionally, teammates may use prep time before a crossfire if there is something about which they'd like to confer.

To help clarify this structure, walk through the path that each speaker takes in the round. For example, note that if you are the first speaker of Team A, you will read the case, then participate in the first crossfire. During the two rebuttals speeches, you should be flowing the speeches but you can also be preparing for your summary speech. You will then give your summary speech and then participate in grand crossfire. Ask for student volunteers to walk through the path of each of the other three speakers.

Class discussion: Resolutional analysis (10 min.)

Write the resolution on the board. Have your students do the same in the center of a blank piece of notebook paper. Ask the students what words stand out to them or seem important to the topic. Guide students through a critical analysis of what the terms in the resolution mean. Your analysis should include a discussion of any terms of art in the resolution; they should learn to think of these words as phrases rather than using the meaning of the individual words. You should also point out the actor of the resolution, if applicable: who or what is doing or would do the action of the resolution. (This is less relevant in topics that assess benefits over harms, as no action is necessarily being taken.)

Informal Assessment Strategies: Meaningful discussion participation, completion of worksheet

Formal Assessment Strategies: Quiz over the structure can be given

**Reflection/Review for Future:**

The speech-by-speech worksheet and their notes about speech times can be a reference for students as they debate for the rest of the unit. In addition, as they start to think about cases and strategies, the “think backwards” approach used to complete the speech-by-speech worksheet should guide their choices. Finally, the topic analysis provides a basis for how they craft their cases (Lesson 5).



## Lesson Plan # 2 Appendix

Note: It is not necessary to have students copy this onto their worksheets verbatim. This is more a list of ideas for the teacher; students' discussion should guide what makes it on the list, but the teacher should make sure these general parts of each speech are covered.

1. Constructive                      Speaker 1  
4 minutes                              Speaker 2

- Read your four minute case
  - Establish your strongest arguments

2. Rebuttal                              Speaker 3  
4 minutes                              Speaker 4

- Spend most (if not all) of your time refuting your opponents' case
  - Signpost- tell your judge which argument you are on in their case: "Look to my opponent's contention one. I have three responses."
  - Respond- give your refutation of the argument
  - Cover all of the key arguments in your opponent's case
- If time remains after your refutation and your team is speaking second, consider rebuilding your own case against the attacks the other team just made

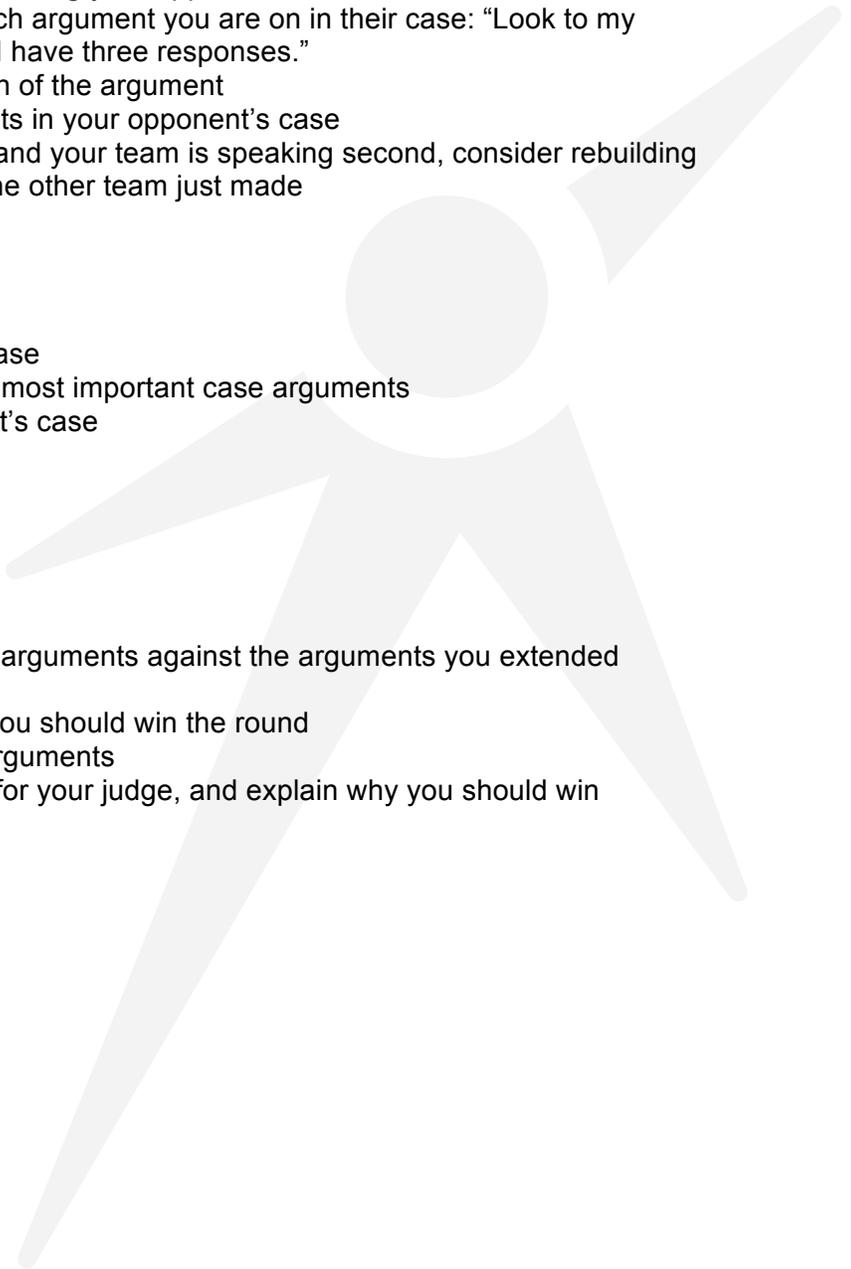
3. Summary                              Speaker 1  
2 minutes                              Speaker 2

- Respond to the responses to your case
- Make extensions of your one or two most important case arguments
- Further the debate on your opponent's case
- Do not introduce new arguments

4. Final Focus                              Speaker 3  
2 minutes                              Speaker 4

- Make voting issues
  - Respond to your opponents' arguments against the arguments you extended
  - Re-extend those arguments
  - Emphasize why they mean you should win the round
- Respond to your opponents' main arguments
- Compare the offense on both sides for your judge, and explain why you should win

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## Structure of the Round (Lesson 2)

1. Constructive  
4 minutes

Speaker 1  
Speaker 2

2. Rebuttal  
4 minutes

Speaker 3  
Speaker 4

3. Summary  
2 minutes

Speaker 1  
Speaker 2

4. Final Focus  
2 minutes

Speaker 3  
Speaker 4



## Lesson Plan #3

**Unit Name:** Public Forum Debate

**Topic:** Argumentation

### **Essential Questions:**

1. What makes a complete argument?
2. What is the difference between a claim, warrant, and impact?
3. How can I analyze a resolution to craft my strategy?

### **Objectives:**

1. Students will be able to distinguish claims, warrants, and impacts.
2. Students will be able to construct arguments that include all three parts.
3. Students will begin to consider arguments on their topic.

**Instructional Materials Needed:** A copy of one pro article and one con article for each student (for homework)

### **Overview of Lesson:**

- Class discussion: Parts of an argument
- Break-out groups: Argument generation

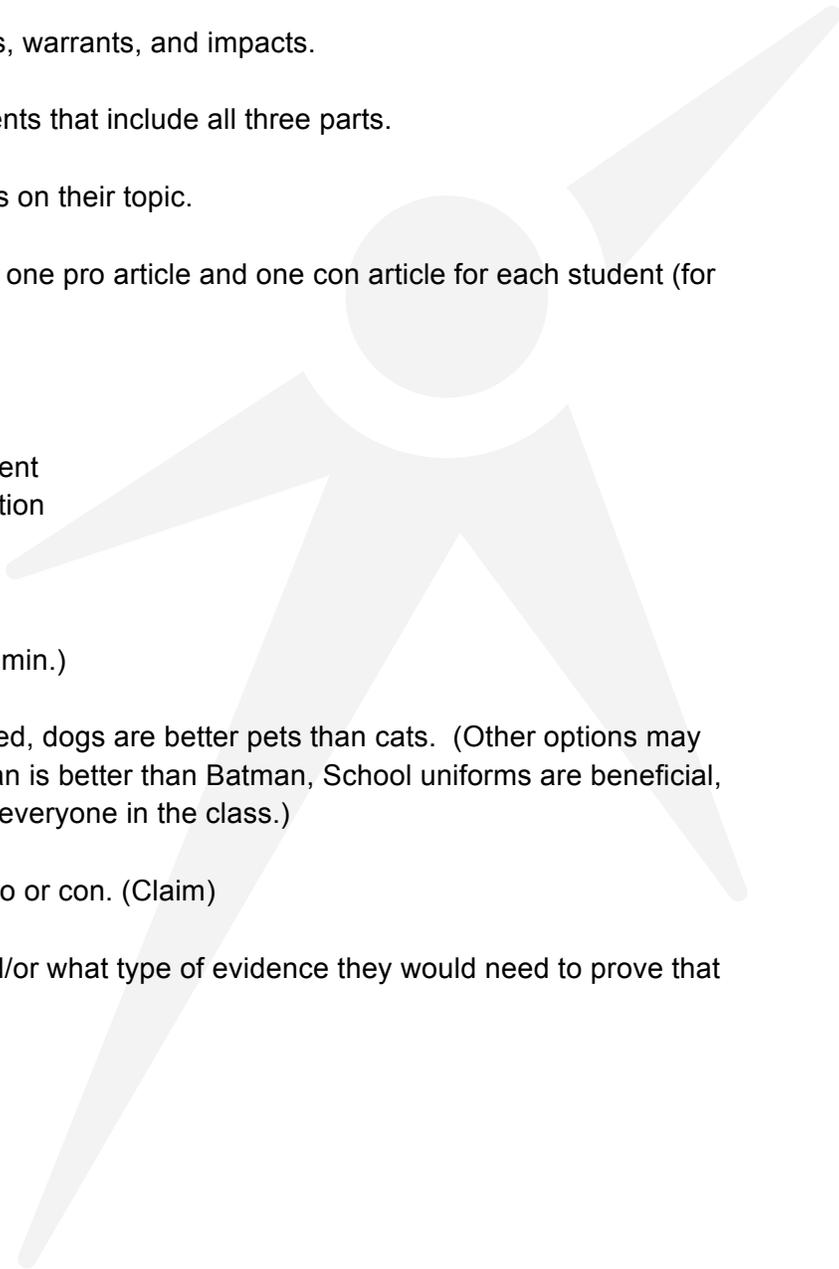
### **Detailed Step-by-Step Lesson:**

Class discussion: Parts of an argument (15 min.)

Introduce the resolution for the day: Resolved, dogs are better pets than cats. (Other options may include Coke is better than Pepsi, Spiderman is better than Batman, School uniforms are beneficial, etc. Anything you feel will be accessible to everyone in the class.)

Solicit an argument from the class, either pro or con. (Claim)

Ask students why that argument is true, and/or what type of evidence they would need to prove that it is true. (Warrant)



Ask students why that argument is important-- how does it prove that dogs are better pets than cats (or vice versa)? (Impact)

Introduce the structure claim, warrant, impact, and ask students to record it in their notes.

- **Claim:** what you are arguing or trying to prove
- **Warrant:** why your claim is correct (usually supported by evidence)
- **Impact:** why your claim is significant

Compare this structure to writing a formal essay, which should also have these three parts. A claim is like a topic sentence, introducing a student's point. Next comes the evidence that proves the point. Finally, an impact is equivalent to tying the point back to the overall thesis of the essay, which, in the case of a debate, is the resolution.

Note that every argument they make in their cases and during the rest of the debate need to have a claim, warrant, and impact.

Do another example together as a class, perhaps for the other side of the resolution. Solicit a claim, warrant, and impact from different students.

Break-out groups: Argument generation (45 min.)

Break students into small groups (3-4 students) and tell them to generate five complete arguments for either side of the practice resolution. (10 min.)

Next, have each group look over their notes from the demonstration debate and identify as many arguments as they can in complete claim, warrant, impact form. (15 min.)

Finally, have each group begin to brainstorm potentially arguments for their debate topic, based on the resolitional analysis from last class. (10 min.)

Come back together as a class and discuss each of the three exercises, focusing on generating a large list of arguments for the "real" topic. (10 min.)

For homework: At the end of class, hand out a pro article and a con article to each student and ask them to find at least two claims with warrants in each article, highlight them, and be ready to share them in class tomorrow.

**Informal Assessment Strategies:** Class discussion participation, small group participation

**Formal Assessment Strategies:** Assign students claims and have them write out proper warrant and impact analysis for each claim.

**Reflection/Review for Future:** Claim warrant impact form will be referenced whenever we talk about making an argument, from research and casing to refutation and flowing.



## Lesson Plan #4

**Unit Name:** Public Forum Debate

**Topic:** Research

### **Essential Questions:**

1. What makes a source credible?
2. How do I find credible sources?
3. What makes a quality piece of evidence?

### **Objectives:**

1. Students will find at least two quality pieces of evidence in class.
2. Students will be able to replicate the research process on their own.
3. Students will be able to distinguish between strong and weak evidence.

**Instructional Materials Needed:** A computer and projector for demonstrating search process, computer lab or laptops for students if available

Note: This lesson can be approached differently based on your students' access to technology. This may be a good day to make a trip to the computer lab or use student laptops, but it can also be completed using the articles assigned as homework that you have selected and printed in advance.

### **Overview of Lesson:**

- Mini-lecture: Research process
- Class discussion: Evidence
- Work time: Research

### **Detailed Step-by-Step Lesson:**

Mini-lecture: Research process (20 min.)

On the projector, lead the students through the process you used to find the articles they read as homework.

Search engines: Walk students through a search on Google Scholar and any additional databases to which your school grants access.

Google Scholar: Search articles and uncheck include patents. Once you've entered an initial search, show students how they can limit their date range and also encourage them to uncheck "include citations," as this will exclude articles not available in full text.

Students want to know: Why can't we just use Google?

- Anyone can publish anything on the internet. A generic Google search will include blogs and other sources that are not credible.
- Introduce concept of peer review: this is a way to ensure quality and credibility of an article because it means other professionals in the field have reviewed the author's work.

Different search engines will be better suited for different topics. For example, if the topic is strongly related to current events (i.e. "Resolved: The benefits of domestic surveillance by the NSA outweigh the harms"), credible news sources found in a Google Scholar search may be more helpful than older journal articles from a database like JStor. News searches allow students to stay up to date on the latest developments of a topic.

Search terms: Now that your students can see the search engine, what terms are you entering to get the best results?

- Don't just search the exact wording of the resolution! Scholarly authors or news sources don't write for debate rounds. They write about the topics that we also happen to debate. This means that the best information will be found by looking into those general topics, not the resolution itself.
- Quotation marks around phrases or terms of art (discussed yesterday as a part of resolutional analysis)
- Typing AND between search terms is unnecessary- this is the default setting in search engines
- Typing OR between search terms will broaden your search
- Are there synonymous terms or phrases to those used in the resolution that students can use in their search?

Demonstrate a quick article sweep to create a folder of articles, letting students know that they will do this on their own as homework.

- Tell them to skim the title, abstract, intro, and conclusion to assess the article's relevance to the topic.
- If it seems like it may be useful, save it and move on!
- After they have gathered some articles, then it's time to go back and read them more thoroughly and look for evidence.
- Let students know that not every article they read will be a direct source of evidence; some will be background, others will be cards for cases and blocks, but it is all valuable for building their knowledge of the topic.

Class discussion: Evidence (20 min.)

Introduce the concept of evidence: a quote from a scholarly source used to support a claim. There must be a warrant within the evidence; just because an expert says something, that doesn't mean it should be immediately trusted.

Ask several students to read out the evidence they found in the article. Ask the class to evaluate: does it support a relevant claim? Does it contain an internal warrant?

Introduce the idea of a tagline: a sentence that introduces the claim which the card will expand upon. Ask students to generate a tagline for each piece of evidence you gather as a class.

Citation: Show students on the board how to cite the articles you gave them, and have them copy that citation onto the article. Tell them that you will expect all of their evidence to be cited in that format.

Author last name, first name. Author qualifications (may require a quick google search). "Title of article." *Title of publication/ journal*. Website. Date published. Date accessed. [The style of citation is not important for debate purposes. If there is a citation style you have used in class, go with that. Just make sure students are collecting all of the above information.]

**Work time:** Research (20 min.)

This can take place either on student laptops or in a computer lab. If this is not an option, consider printing additional articles for your students to read and highlight during class.

Homework: Each student should find five articles in an article sweep. You may ask them to create a bibliography of these sources using a proper citation, or just e-mail you the articles as they find them. They should also cut at least 5 complete cards from these articles. Remind students that in many articles, they will be able to find more than one card per article.

**Informal Assessment Strategies:** Evidence shared with the class by individuals

**Formal Assessment Strategies:** You may ask students to turn in their evidence assignment in one of several ways.

- Handing in the entire paper articles with their cards highlighted
- Asking them to highlight digitally and e-mail in their highlighted versions of the article
- Have them write down the first and last few words of each quote that they highlighted on a separate sheet of paper and turn it in you

In your feedback, you should ensure that each card has a full warrant. You may suggest a different cutting of a piece of evidence that captures the author's warrant.

**Reflection/Review for Future:** Students' research is the basis of their knowledge about the topic. They will use evidence they cut in their cases (lesson 5), and to help them formulate responses to their opponents' cases (lesson 7).

## Lesson Plan #5

**Unit Name:** Public Forum Debate

**Topic:** Casing

### **Essential Questions:**

1. What are the necessary parts of a good case?

### **Objectives:**

1. Students will gather a list of arguments for both sides of the topic.
2. Students will be prepared to independently construct their cases.

**Instructional Materials Needed:** Students' cards and articles from their homework, laptops or computer lab if available

Note: At this point, it will probably be useful to solidify your students' debate partnerships, either by assigning partners or letting students choose. There are several different ways to go about partnerships and case-writing. You may elect to have one student in each pair be the first speaker and the other to be the second speaker, regardless of which side they are debating. Another option is to have each student be primarily responsible for one side of the resolution. They may write the case for that side, and then act as second speaker in the pair only on that side, so that they will do the bulk of the impromptu debating on the case with which they are more familiar. You may also choose to allow students to work collaboratively on cases for both sides; however, having each student write at least one case of their own ensures accountability for their learning. If you think your students are up to the challenge, you may also have each student write a case for both sides and then have the partners combine them after the fact.

### **Overview of Lesson:**

- Class discussion: Topic- specific arguments
- Mini-lecture: Components of a case
- Break-out groups: Case meeting with partner
- Work time: Case-writing

### **Detailed Step-by-Step Lesson:**

Class discussion: Topic-specific arguments (10 min.)

Using their research and evidence, have the class generate an exhaustive list of arguments for the pro and con, including warrants. This list should include all of the arguments discussed yesterday,

but in more developed form now that students have done research and hopefully found warrants for their claims.

Mini-lecture: Components of a case (10 min.)

Write a case outline on the board and explain each of the parts

Opening quote (optional): A quote from a well-known figure that someone relates to your side of the resolution. This should not be a full piece of evidence. Rather, it's a sentence or two designed to catch the audience's attention and introduce the team's stance on the resolution. If a student uses an opening quote, they should include a small transitional phrase before they introduce the resolution. "Because we agree with whoever, my partner and I stand (pro/con) on the resolution, resolved:..."

Resolution: If no opening quote is used, students can simply begin their case with, "My partner and I stand (pro/con) on the resolution, resolved:..."

Resolutional analysis/ framework/ definitions: This may or may not be necessary depending on the resolution. Some may have contentious terms that will significantly alter the debate, while others will be more straightforward. It is a good idea for students to have definitions available for all the key terms in the resolution, whether from a dictionary, scholarly article, or simply analytical. They can decide if they think it is necessary to read those definitions in every round, or if they will only read them if they find their opponents' definitions problematic.

Contentions: Students simply need to write "Contention one:" and begin with the claim, warrant, and impact of their first question. If desired, contentions can also have sub-points. In this case, it may read something like, "Contention one: a sentence describing the general point of both arguments together. Sub-point a: the student dives into the claim, warrant, and impact of the first argument. Sub-point b: the student develops the claim, warrant, and impact of the second." Students should probably limit themselves to three contentions at most, to ensure that they have enough time in the four-minute speech to develop each of their arguments fully.

Break-out groups: Case meeting with partners (10 min.)

Each student should meet with their partner to brainstorm case arguments, decide who wants to write each case (if applicable), and write an outline to be turned in by the end of class.

Work time: Case-writing (25 min.)

Students can either work on laptops or read and continue to highlight articles they have printed for themselves. They should also use this time to create a rough outline of their case, including the arguments they want to put in it, to be turned in at the end of class. These outlines can include questions about any parts of the case-writing process that may still be unclear.

**Informal Assessment Strategies:** Participation in the class-wide argument generation, as well as having students outline and draft cases for feedback.

**Formal Assessment Strategies:** Final draft of a debate case.

**Reflection/Review for Future:** Their cases will be the most foundational piece of each debate.



## Lesson Plan #6

**Unit Name:** Public Forum Debate

**Topic:** Flowing

### **Essential Questions:**

1. How do I take effective notes on a debate round?

### **Objectives:**

1. Students will develop and practice their own shorthand for note taking.
2. Students will learn and practice a format for note taking during a debate.

**Instructional Materials Needed:** Each student's case for one side of the resolution.

### **Overview of Lesson:**

- Mini-lecture: Flowing
- Individual activity: Create your own shorthand
- Break-out groups: Practice flowing
- Class discussion: Pre-flows and extensions

### **Detailed Step-by-Step Lesson:**

Mini-lecture: Flowing (10 min.)

Note: This lesson will make much more sense with an example of a flow on the board.

- Flowing is the word used for note taking in a debate round.
- The goal is to be able to capture as much information from your opponent's case as quickly as possible.
- It allows you to keep track of everything your opponents say. You will also plan your own speeches on your flow, so it's important to keep it organized.
- Introduce the structure of the flow on the board: orient a blank piece of paper vertically and flow in one column per speech.
- Use some notation to distinguish evidence from analysis. One possibility is to write the name of the author of the card, underline it, and drawing a vertical line on the left side of the column that distinguishes the content of the card from the case writer's own analysis. Another way to do it is to simply write a diagonal slash underneath the author's name.
- Be sure students give themselves lots of space on their flows, spreading things out vertically. This is helpful because their opponents may have multiple responses to one

contention or sub-point. On the flow, students should be able to trace the course of each argument through the round horizontally. With lots of space, it is easier to keep all of the arguments related to a single contention straight on the flow. It prevents mix-ups.

- One way to write more quickly is to eliminate vowels. Write an example on the board. “Ths sntnc dsnt hv vwls” as an example that it is still possible to tell the meaning of a sentence even without the vowels.
- Another way is to use a pre-made shorthand system.

Individual activity: Create your own shorthand (10-15 min.)

Generate a list of words commonly used in debate rounds and on the topic your class will be debating. (You can either create this list yourself in advance or do it together as a class.)

For example:

increasing/ decreasing: up arrow or down arrow

Contention 1, Contention 2, Contention 3: I. II. III. OR C1 C2 C3

Sub-point a, sub-point b, sub-point c: a) b) c)

Definitions: defs

Benefits/ harms: bens/ hrms

Topic-specific words

Give students time to copy down the list, and have them create their own symbols or abbreviations for the commonly used words. (You may ask the students to turn in the list if you would like.)

Peer flowing exercise (10 min.)

Students get into pairs (preferably not with their debate partner) and read each other their cases to practice flowing. Students should give peer feedback on their companion’s spacing, use of shorthand, and structure.

Class discussion: Pre-flows and extensions (20 min.)

Introduce the concept of a pre-flow. A pre-flow is a pre-written flow of the arguments in your case. Both you and your partner should have a pre-flow ready for whichever side you will be in a debate. It should have structure, as discussed with other flows. Students should pre-flow their case and then turn in their preflow.

Extensions are your way of emphasizing your arguments to your judge. They should take place in the summary and the final focus. Your pre-flows are the best way to give yourself cues as to what your extensions should contain. Every extension needs to include the claim, warrant, and impact of your argument, so your pre-flow should include all three parts as well, in a shortened form.

Students should take notes on the following:

To make an extension, you must first signpost, or let your judge know where you are on the flow (for example, “Look to Contention One, Sub-point A”). Next, respond to any of the responses your opponent made to your argument. This clears the way for you to pull your argument through. Then, re-explain the claim, warrant, and impact of the argument.

**Informal Assessment Strategies:** Circulating around during group work; first practice flow and preflow: feedback should be given on spacing, structure, use of abbreviations; list of shorthand (can be turned in if desired)

**Formal Assessment Strategies:** Flows of subsequent debate rounds in class and at tournaments

**Reflection/Review for Future:**

They will flow every case and debate round from here on out, and will have plenty of opportunities to practice this skill.



## Lesson Plan #7

**Unit Name:** Public Forum Debate

**Topic:** Refutation

### Essential Questions:

1. How do I refute my opponent's arguments?
2. What is the difference between an offensive argument and a defensive argument?
3. What is a turn?

### Objectives:

1. Students will be able to distinguish between offensive and defensive arguments.
2. Students will be able to indict a flawed piece of evidence.
3. Students will understand and be able to generate turns.

**Instructional Materials Needed:** Good card/ bad card hand-out for each student

### Overview of Lesson:

- Class discussion: Offense versus defense
- Break-out groups: Defensive responses
- Class discussion: Turns
- Individual activity: Putting it all together

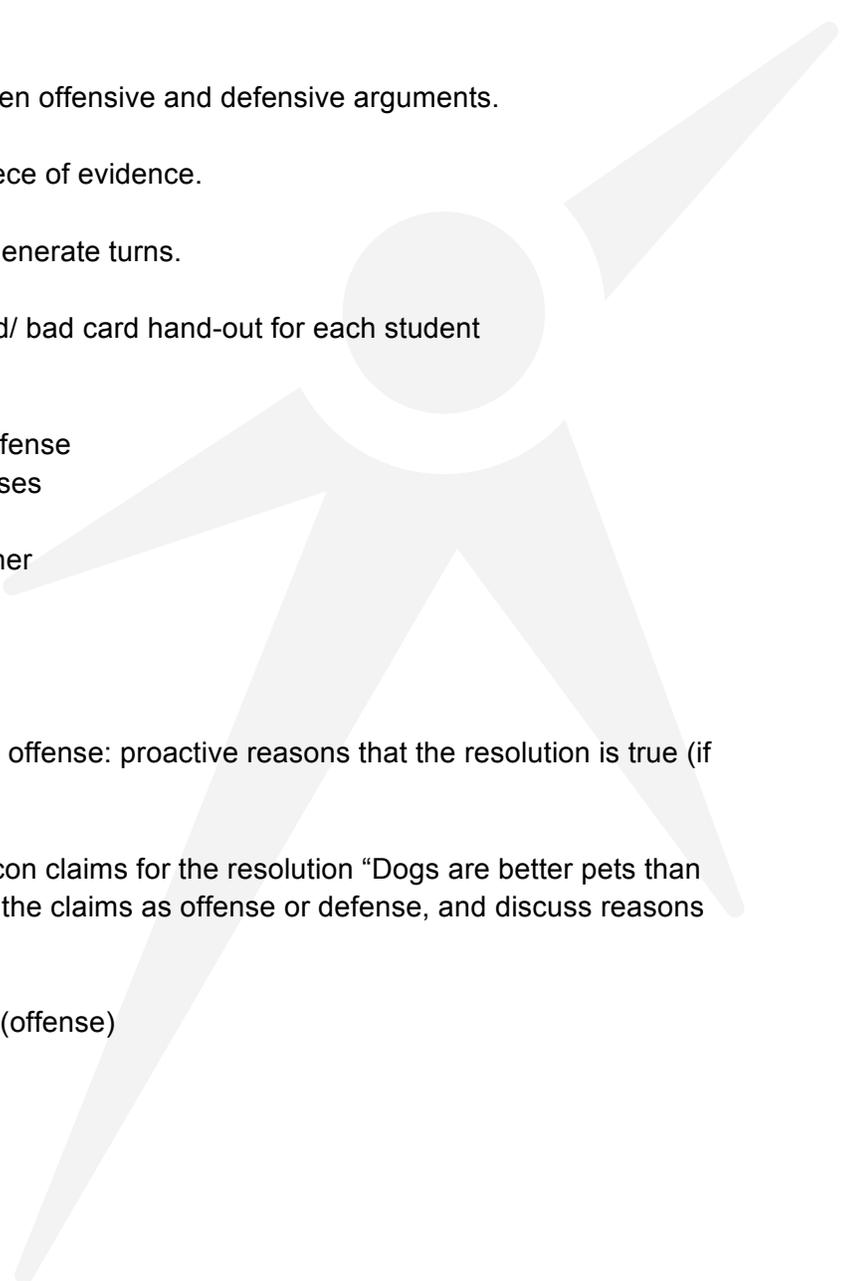
### Detailed Step-by-Step Lesson:

Identify offense v. defense (10 min.)

All arguments in your contentions should be offense: proactive reasons that the resolution is true (if you're pro) or false (if you're con).

To illustrate this concept, write the pro and con claims for the resolution "Dogs are better pets than cats" on the board. Ask students to identify the claims as offense or defense, and discuss reasons why.

Pro claim: Dogs are more playful than cats. (offense)



Pro claim: Cats are not very playful. (defense)

Pro claim: Dogs can be trained as service animals. (offense)

Con claim: Cats are easier to care for than dogs. (offense)

Con claim: Dogs are too much work to be good pets for most people. (defense)

Here is a set of arguments for a past topic, "Resolved: The benefits of domestic surveillance by the NSA outweigh the harms." Go through the same process as above. You may use these examples, or generate examples on the topic the class will be debating.

Pro claim: Domestic surveillance prevents terrorist attacks. (offense)

Pro claim: Domestic surveillance is allowed by the Constitution. (defense)

Pro claim: NSA surveillance does not affect what people will or won't talk about on the Internet. (defense)

Con claim: Surveillance leads to speech chilling, which prevents citizens from expressing their true feelings because they think they may be monitored, and this harms democracy. (offense)

Con claim: The NSA is ineffective at preventing terrorist attacks. (defense)

Break-out groups: Defensive responses (20 min.)

Discuss how to make defensive arguments (5 min.)

Let students know that they should make defensive arguments against your opponent's case, if they respond to the arguments your opponent is making. However, on their own, defensive responses are not proactive reasons to vote for you.

The first way to create a defensive response is to evaluate their opponents' arguments for complete claim warrant impact form. Remind students that evidence must have an internal warrant. Tell them to ask themselves if the impacts of their opponents' arguments are relevant or significant.

Ask students: Why is it a bad idea to over-rely on these types of arguments? What will your opponent likely do in the next speech? Continuously making a "no warrant" response opens the door for your opponent to simply re-explain their argument, claiming that it has a warrant.

Indicting evidence (15 min.)

When questioning a piece of evidence, tell students to ask about author qualifications. Also, if their opponents' evidence uses statistics, let them know to question the methodology of their study. Where are those statistics coming from? What is the sample size of their study?

Break students into small groups (3-4 students) and give them the "good card/ bad card" hand-out. Ask them to evaluate each piece of evidence and ask themselves: Is it a good piece of evidence, a bad piece of evidence, or is there a question you want to ask to help you determine the quality of the evidence? Then ask them to write out their reason why they classified the evidence the way they did.

Class discussion: Turns (20 min.)

A turn is a response to your opponent's argument that shows that their argument is actually offense for you. There are two types of turns: link turns and impact turns.

Example: The pro claims that dogs are more playful than cats because they can fetch and go on walks.

The con may turn this argument, saying that cats are actually more playful because they like to chase things like laser pointers or feathers on strings. They would also argue that this is better than fetching and going and walks, perhaps because anyone can do these activities with a cat and small children or people with limited mobility can't go on walks with dogs, which means that cats are preferable. This is a link turn.

Another turn that the con could make would be to agree that dogs are more playful but that this makes them worse pets because they are more difficult to take care of and require more attention from their owners. This is an impact turn.

What if we made both of these arguments at once?

Cats are more playful than dogs, and more playful pets are worse because they require more care and attention from their owners. This is called a double-turn. You've proven that the impact of the argument is bad, and also proven that your side gets that bad impact.

Here is another set of examples on a past topic: "Resolved: Unilateral force by the United States is justified to prevent nuclear proliferation."

The pro claims that without unilateral intervention from the US, countries that are enriching uranium will give it to other countries which leads to more and more nuclear proliferation as more countries are armed with nuclear weapons.

The con can make an impact turn and say that more nuclear proliferation is better because it will lead to mutually assured destruction, wherein since all countries have nuclear weapons, no one is willing to fire them and the likelihood of a nuclear attack is actually smaller than if only some

countries had weapons. Therefore, it is *preferable* if the US doesn't act and more countries have weapons, because this will lead to the best outcomes.

Solicit examples of both types of turns on the class topic from students.

Individual activity: Putting it all together (10 min.)

Hand back your students' pre-flows and tell them to answer their own case. They should write multiple numbered responses, ideally of many different types, in the next column, as though they are going to give the rebuttal speech.

For homework: Assign your students to write responses to common arguments on the topic. These are called blocks, and can be used in their debates. There are several ways to go about assigning blocks:

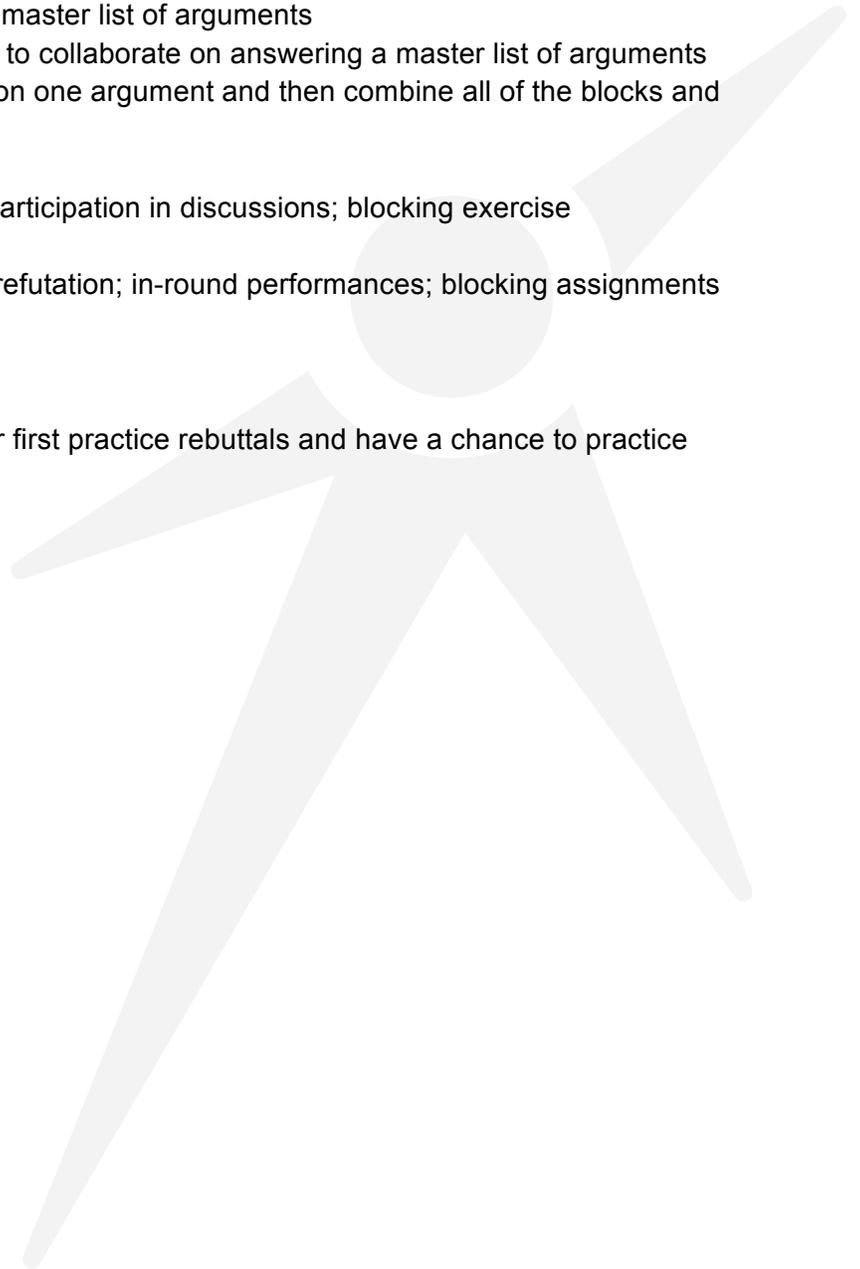
- Let each student choose an argument or set of arguments
- Let each set of partners divide up a master list of arguments
- Allow students to form small groups to collaborate on answering a master list of arguments
- Assign a group of students to work on one argument and then combine all of the blocks and distribute to the entire class

**Informal Assessment Strategies:** Class participation in discussions; blocking exercise

**Formal Assessment Strategies:** Quiz on refutation; in-round performances; blocking assignments

**Reflection/Review for Future:**

In the next lesson, students will deliver their first practice rebuttals and have a chance to practice the skills learned in this lesson.



## Lesson # 7 Appendix

### Student Prompts:

*Claim: The death penalty is not justified because the evidence used to determine the guilt of the accused is flawed.*

### Dan Markel writes:

[Assistant Professor, Florida State University College of Law, "State, Be Not Proud: A Retributivist Defense of the Commutation of Death Row and the Abolition of the Death Penalty," Harvard Civil Rights-Civil Liberties Law Review, Summer 2005, 40 Harv. C.R.-C.L. L. Rev. 407]

"What about the accuracy objections? Presumably, one could also try to ameliorate the anxieties about accuracy through case-by-case review, under an evidentiary standard of moral certainty, as opposed to "merely" beyond a reasonable doubt. [n180](#) This route seems tempting as a criticism of the blanket commutation, but it should be resisted. For **often**, what seems morally certain will depend upon facts as we know them at a given time. **These facts sometimes turn out to be quite shaky.** [n181](#) **A recent news item illustrates the problem in its full depth.** A police laboratory in Houston, which sits in Harris County, was recently accused of having provided false DNA evidence about thousands of crimes over the last twenty-five years. [n182](#) What is more, over seventy people have been executed for crimes in Harris County since the death penalty was reinstated **in Texas in 1976.** [n183](#) We do not yet know how many people have been wrongfully convicted as a result of the incompetence or malfeasance in this lab. But what might have seemed a moral certainty **to a scrupulous and searching jury during these last twenty-five years** could easily change if the factual predicate for that certainty is faulty. **The problem with the police lab in Harris County is especially disconcerting because DNA evidence lends an appearance of scientific certainty to convictions obtained through its use.** A blanket commutation of death row recognizes the intractable fallibility of our institutions in a way in which case-by-case review cannot. [n184](#) For although the culpability of an offender is decided case-by-case, he is [[\\*451](#)] still entitled to a system that determines that culpability accurately and fairly. [n185](#) In other words, even "if all 171 Illinois death row inmates were, in fact guilty, that did not mean that the broken system's decision that they should die was one worthy of trust." [n186](#) Moreover, a defense of case-by-case review cannot gain traction by pointing to the DNA exonerations prior to Ryan's blanket commutation as proof that the system works. That is because, as Professor Marshall explains: [We] are not able to inspect all convictions in the same manner that we can inspect convictions susceptible to DNA corroboration or refutation. Instead, we must treat the DNA cases as the equivalent of a random sampling of convictions and recognize that the error rate this sampling reveals, and the nature of errors it reveals, replicates the general error rate and sources of error among all cases. [n187](#) The evidence before Ryan indicated that there was no basis to conclude that the state was reliably imposing death sentences on the right people for the right reasons. Hence, until the problems of sorting errors could be ameliorated, it was not unreasonable to prevent the state from making future sorting errors. Garvey's retort is that case-by-case review would reveal whether someone might not have committed the crime. [n188](#) What the evidence shows, however, is that epistemic certainty will not be ours so long as human beings mistakenly remember, falsely testify, or incompetently handle DNA evidence **in those few cases where DNA evidence exists. We cannot forget that the people who were exonerated on death row were already proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt. In some of the cases, the courts had pronounced that the evidence implicating the defendant was overwhelming.** And then they were exonerated. [n189](#) Assuming *arguendo* that some people do deserve execution for their crimes, Garvey's contention that case-by-case review would be the solution more consonant with mercy as equity misses the point. [[\\*452](#)] What the experience in Illinois reveals is that all criminal prosecutions potentially leave us wondering whether we might plausibly have missed something. As I explain below, that does not mean we abandon all punishment, but it does entail that we punish with modesty about our capabilities, and that we punish, to the extent possible, in ways that permit social contrition for wrongs the state commits against the erroneously convicted."

Is this evidence strong or weak? Why? What is one question would you have for your opponent if they read this evidence?

Continued on next page...

*Claim: A right to self-defense exists.*

Tziporah Kasachkoff explains:

[Professor of Philosophy at the Graduate Center at City University of New York. "Killing in Self-Defense: An Unquestionable or Problematic Defense? Law and Philosophy Vol. 17, no. 5/6 Nov. 1998 p. 509-531]

"Everything else being equal, persons have a right not to be killed [or harmed]. If we, the victims of an attack, have such rights, then our attacker, himself a person, also has a right not to be killed, or at least he starts out with such a right. The reason it is morally justified for us to kill another in self defense is that by posing a lethal threat to us that person has forfeited his right not to be killed."

Is this evidence strong or weak? Why? What is one question would you have for your opponent if they read this evidence?

*Claim: Nonviolent movements are only effective when a government respects the values of its constituents.*

*Michael Walzer explains:*

[Professor Emeritus at the Institute for Advanced Study. Just and Unjust Wars, 1977, pg. 331-2]

"Nonviolence has only been effective against those opponents whose code of morality was fundamentally similar to that of the civilian defenders, and whose ruthlessness was then restrained... It is difficult to see how Gandhi's methods could apply to a totalitarian state where opponents of the regimes disappear in the middle of the night, and are never seen or heard from again."

Is this evidence strong or weak? Why? What is one question would you have for your opponent if they read this evidence?

*Claim: The people of the United States do not support a path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants.*

A report from the Pew Research Center explains:

["Surge of Central American Children Roils U.S. Immigration Debate" July 16, 2014

<http://www.people-press.org/2014/07/16/surge-of-central-american-children-roils-u-s-immigration-debate/>]

"The public remains supportive of a broad revamp of the immigration system to allow people in the U.S. illegally to gain legal status if they meet certain requirements. But overall support for a path to legal status has slipped to 68% from 73% in February. Those who favor providing legal status for undocumented immigrants were asked if they should be able to apply for citizenship or permanent residency. Overall, 40% say they should be able to apply for citizenship, down from 46% in February."

Is this evidence strong or weak? Why? What is one question would you have for your opponent if they read this evidence?

## Teacher's Notes

Markel: A strong piece of evidence. It combines empirical analysis about a specific DNA lab in Texas that mishandled a significant amount of evidence, and also ends with analysis about why this means that the death penalty ought not be used as a punishment.

Kasachkoff: A weak piece of evidence. It makes a claim, but the author herself does not provide a warrant.

Walzer: Overall a weak piece of evidence. Its use of language and metaphor may be considered strong, but there is not a concrete warrant for why specific types of regimes would not listen to their citizens. He merely says, "It is difficult to see..." why a repressive regime would listen, rather than providing any concrete reason why they wouldn't.

Pew Research Center: A weak piece of evidence. Students may ask questions about the source, which is reputable but may not be familiar to them. They may also ask about the methodology of the study. The main problem is actually the difference between the tagline and the content of the evidence. While the Pew study concludes that support for a path to citizenship is decreasing in the US, it concedes that a majority of citizens still support the policy.



## Lesson Plan #8

**Unit Name:** Public Forum Debate

**Topic:** Delivery

**Essential Questions:**

1. What makes someone a persuasive speaker?

**Objectives:**

1. Students will practice good habits for delivering their cases.
2. Students will give their first practice rebuttals.

**Instructional Materials Needed:** Students' cases, post-it notes

**Overview of Lesson:**

- Class activity: Delivery
- Individual activity: Case reading
- Break-out groups: Practice rebuttals

**Detailed Step-by-Step Lesson:**

Class activity: Delivery (5 min.)

As students enter: give each student three post-it notes and ask them to write down 3 different qualities of a good speaker and stick them on the board.

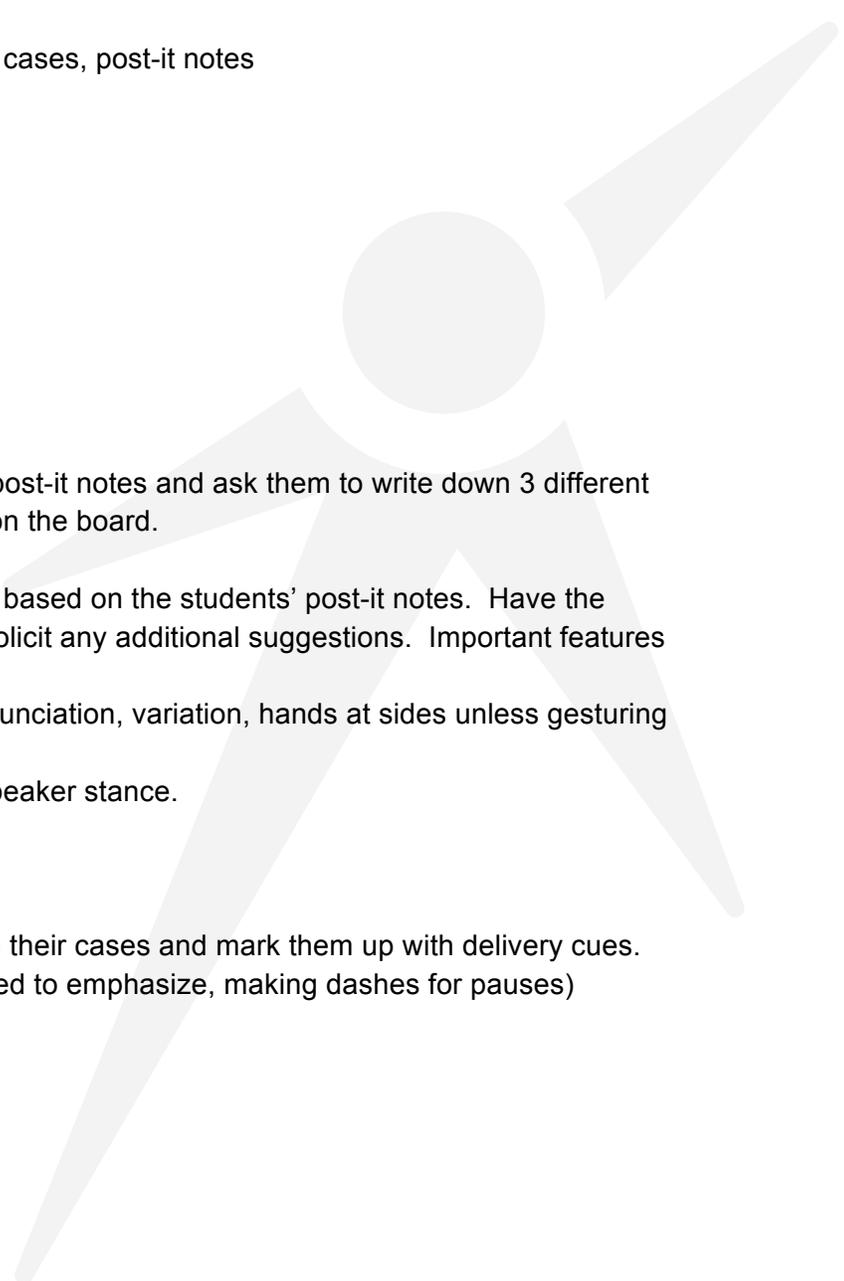
Generate a list of best practices for delivery based on the students' post-it notes. Have the students copy the list into their notes, and solicit any additional suggestions. Important features include:

feet planted, good posture, loud enough, enunciation, variation, hands at sides unless gesturing

Have students stand and practice a good speaker stance.

Individual activity: Case reading (15 min.)

Give the students 5 minutes to read through their cases and mark them up with delivery cues. (Circling or underlining words they really need to emphasize, making dashes for pauses)



Tell the students to stand up and read their cases through twice, practicing all of the best practices on the board. Circulate through the room and make individual corrections as needed. (10 min.)

Break-out groups: Practice rebuttals (30 min.)

Each set of partners should debate each other. The two students should perform a coin flip to choose speaking order. Students will alternate reading the constructive that they wrote and then give a second speech refuting the other person's constructive, replicating the first four speeches of the round (excluding crossfire). In essence, each student will be playing the role of both debaters on the team by giving the first two speeches of the round. Each debater gets one minute of prep time before their refutation speech. Students should practice good delivery techniques, flowing, and refutation. (20 min.)

Once they finish, students should write a reflection about the experience to be turned in at the end of class. Questions include what went well with your refutation? Where did you get stuck? What do you think comes naturally in your delivery? What do you need to spend more time practicing? (10 min.)

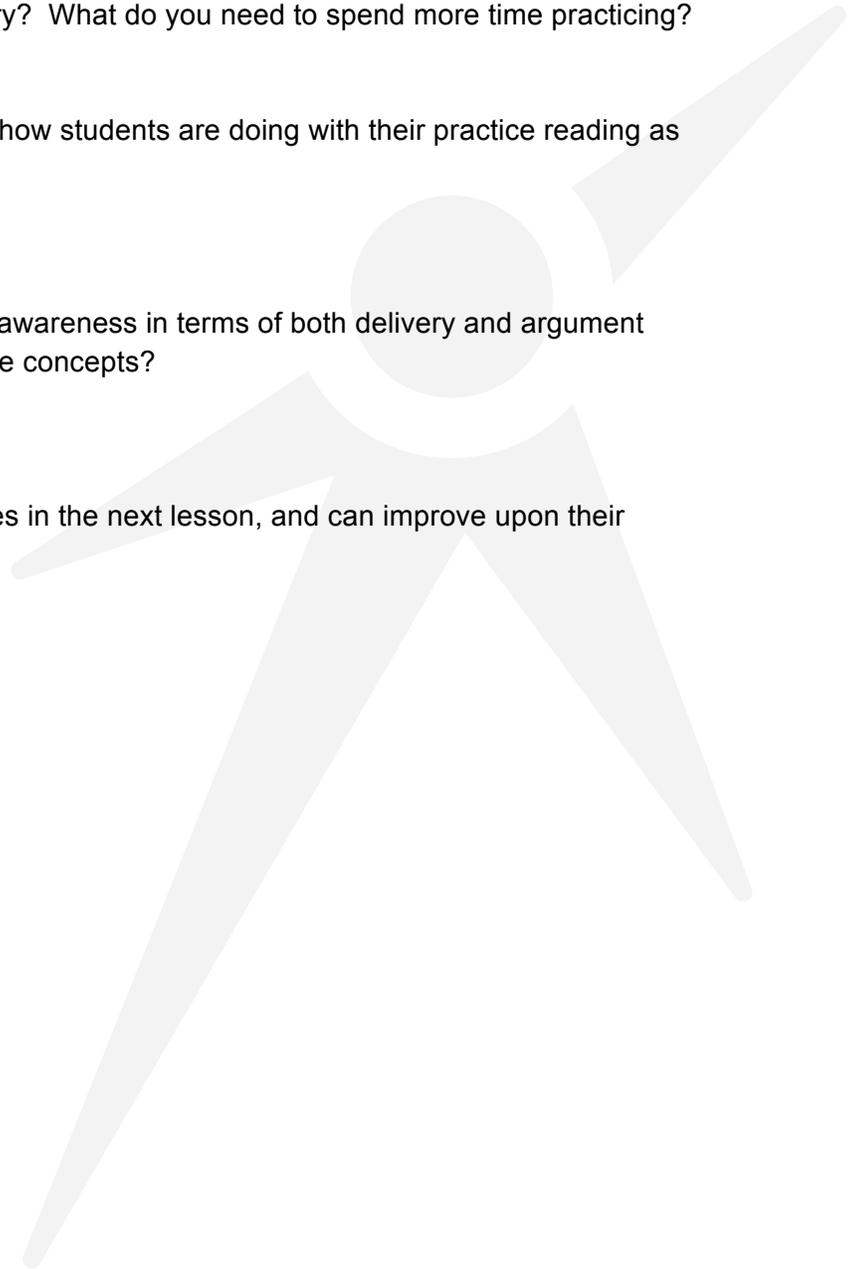
**Informal Assessment Strategies:** Gauge how students are doing with their practice reading as you circulate through the room.

**Formal Assessment Strategies:**

Reflection journals: evaluate students' self-awareness in terms of both delivery and argument content. Are they understanding key debate concepts?

**Reflection/Review for Future:**

Students will have their first practice debates in the next lesson, and can improve upon their practice rebuttals.



## Lesson Plan #9

**Unit Name:** Public Forum Debate

**Topic:** Crossfire Strategies & Practice Debates

**Essential Questions:**

1. What is the purpose of crossfire?
2. What do you need to accomplish during crossfire?
3. What strategies can you use to accomplish your goals in crossfire?

**Objectives:**

1. Students will understand the goals of crossfire.
2. Students will practice both one-on-one crossfire and grand crossfire.
3. Students will participate in their first practice debates

**Instructional Materials Needed:** Students' cases, a pairing for the practice debates

**Overview of Lesson:**

- Mini-lecture: Crossfire
- Class activity: all-class crossfire
- Break-out groups: practice debates

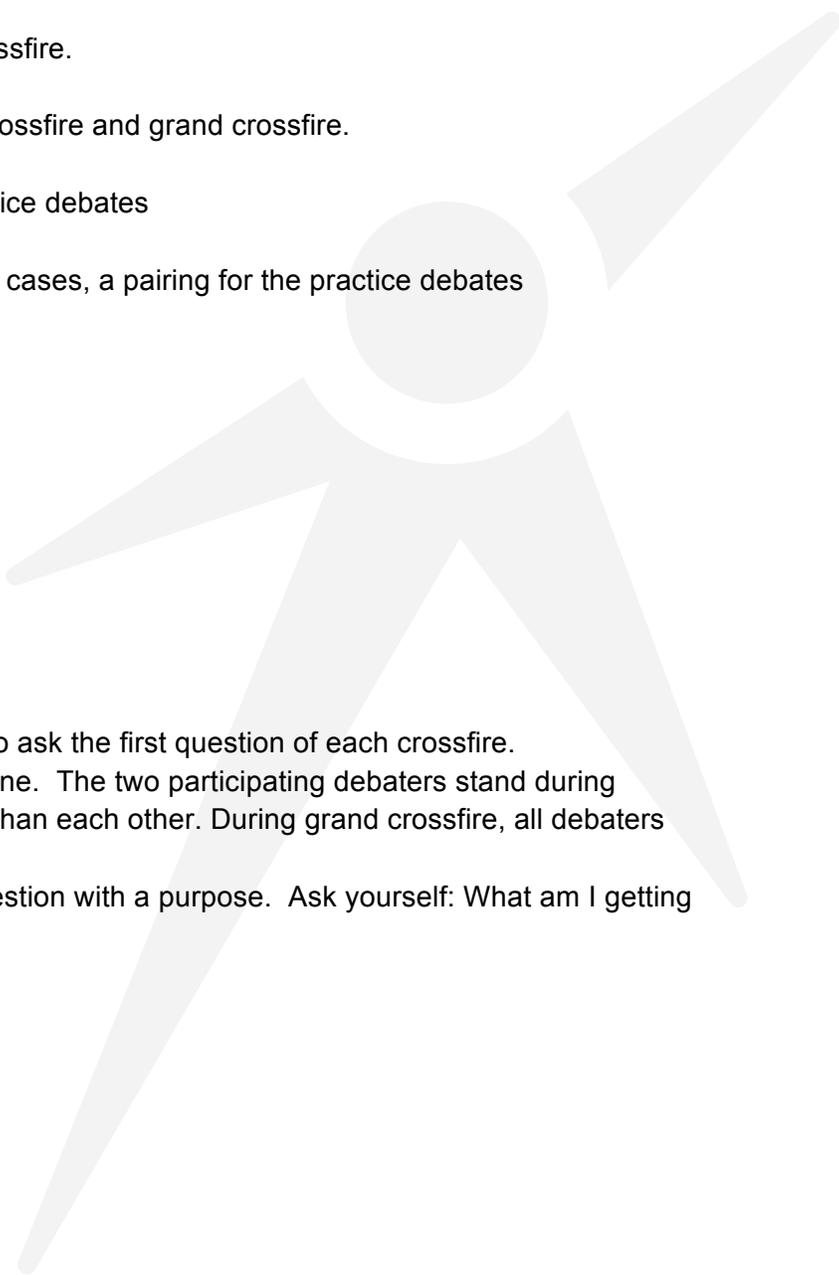
Detailed Step-by-Step Lesson:

Mini-lecture: Crossfire (10 min.)

Nuts and bolts

- Whichever team speaks first will also ask the first question of each crossfire.
- The first two crossfires are one-on-one. The two participating debaters stand during crossfire and face the judge, rather than each other. During grand crossfire, all debaters participate and are seated.
- The golden rule of crossfire is to question with a purpose. Ask yourself: What am I getting out of this?

Importance of crossfire:



- It is your only opportunity to clarify your opponents' arguments. It is important to make sure you have an accurate flow of all of your opponents' arguments, and you may use crossfire to clarify their points. However, this takes away from your time to ask more strategic questions, and it also gives your opponents another change to explain their arguments to the judge.
- Crossfire is your judge's only opportunity to see you and your opponent next to one another. This allows him or her to make a direct comparison, and you want to ensure that you come across favorably.
- Crossfire gives you an opportunity to expose weaknesses in your opponents' case.

#### Potential pitfalls:

- Not knowing what to ask. It may help to have a few go-to crossfire questions specific to the topic.
- Letting your opponent re-explain all of their arguments. Make sure that you politely interrupt your opponent once you have the information you need, rather than letting them ramble on through all of your questioning time.
- Pointless questions that don't get you anything. Again, the emphasis should be on asking strategic questions designed to expose flaws in your opponents' reasoning.
- Asking the "last" question. In your line of questioning, you may get your opponent to reveal a flaw in their case indirectly. For example, you may find two parts of the case that contradict. Ask your opponent to clarify each part individually and ask questions such that they reveal the question. Do not, however, then ask, "Don't these two things contradict each other?" By asking the last question, you are giving your opponent an opportunity to weasel out of the contradiction. It is extremely unlikely that they would ever concede, "Why yes, that is contradictory!" so there's no reason to ask the question.

Class activity: All-class crossfire (15 min.)

Read a student's case aloud to the class and have them flow it.

Once you are finished, give students a minute to brainstorm questions that they have about the case.

Go around the room and have each student ask you one question. Encourage them to try to build on the last person's question if possible, and let them know that no one can ask the same question.

Ask students what they noticed about the exercise. What seemed to work well? Where did they collectively get stuck?

Practice debates (35 min.)

Post the pairing of which teams will be debating. Allow students to read the pairing themselves, and then spread out around the room to begin their first practice debates. Mill around the room to ensure students are on task and to answer any questions that may arise.

**Informal Assessment Strategies:** Questions asked during all-class crossfire, observation during debates.

**Formal Assessment Strategies:** Evaluation of final in-class debate; rebuttal redos

**Reflection/Review for Future:**

Students will use the flows from their first practice debates during the next lesson, in order to complete their first rebuttals redos.



## Lesson Plan #10

**Unit Name:** Public Forum Debate

**Topic:** Argument Comparison and issue selection

**Essential Questions:**

1. Which arguments in the debate are most important?
2. If my opponent and I are both winning some arguments, how do I show that mine are more important?

**Objectives:**

1. Students will understand various weighing strategies.
2. Students will practice weighing in non-topic-specific examples.
3. Students will apply what they learn about weighing to their first rebuttal redos.

**Instructional Materials Needed:** Weighing battle hand-out

**Overview of Lesson:**

- Individual activity: First debate reflection
- Break-out groups: Weighing
- Individual activity: Rebuttal redos

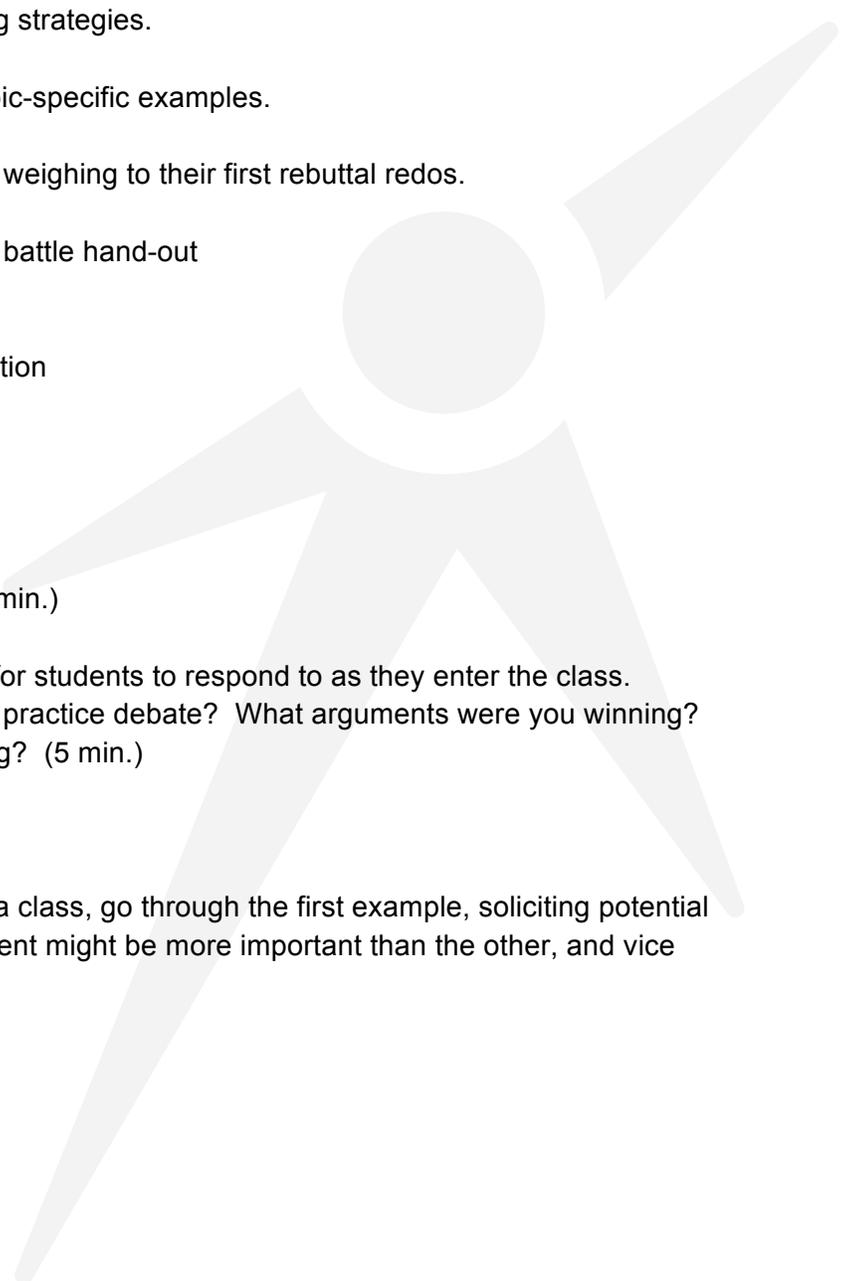
**Detailed Step-by-Step Lesson:**

Individual activity: First debate reflection (5 min.)

Have the following prompt up on the board for students to respond to as they enter the class.  
Reflection: where was the clash in your first practice debate? What arguments were you winning? What arguments was the other team winning? (5 min.)

Break-out groups: Weighing (30 min.)

Hand out the weighing battle hand-out. As a class, go through the first example, soliciting potential arguments for why the impact of one argument might be more important than the other, and vice versa.



Next, break the class into pairs (not with their debate partners) and have them give short speeches weighing between the examples in the rest of the packet.

Bring the class back together for a brief discussion: what different ways did they discover to weigh arguments? Can they name different ways to make comparisons?

Individual Activity: Rebuttal redo (20 min.)

As a class, review the purpose of the last two speeches of the debate, the summary and the final focus

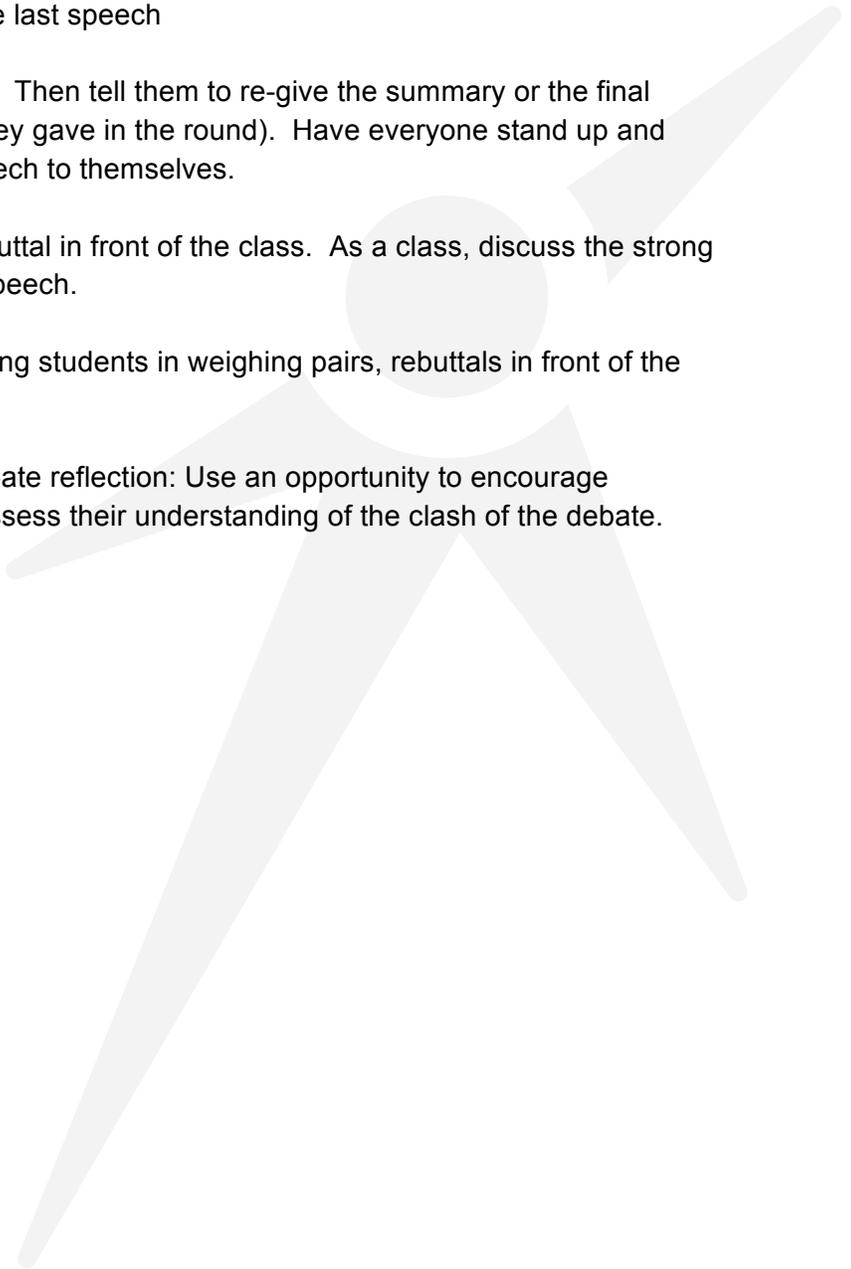
- Go more in-depth on final focus
  - Might look similar in many different rounds
  - Make sure you're making complete and good extensions- these arguments need to stick in the judge's mind
  - Begin with the end in mind- your strategy/ case should be such that you're setting yourself up for success in the last speech

Give the students two minutes of prep time. Then tell them to re-give the summary or the final focus of their practice debate (whichever they gave in the round). Have everyone stand up and face a wall in the room, and deliver the speech to themselves.

Solicit individual volunteers to give their rebuttal in front of the class. As a class, discuss the strong points and areas for improvement in their speech.

**Informal Assessment Strategies:** Observing students in weighing pairs, rebuttals in front of the class

**Formal Assessment Strategies:** First debate reflection: Use an opportunity to encourage students in areas that they can grow and assess their understanding of the clash of the debate.



## Lesson Plan # 10 Appendix

### Weighing Battles

Remember: it doesn't matter how each team is arriving at this impact. Your job is to compare the impacts assuming that they are both true.

The pro is winning an impact that says they will stop billions of dollars of illicit drug trade; the con is winning an impact that saves one thousand lives.

The pro team is winning an impact that says they can prevent a nuclear terrorist attack that would happen within one month; the con is winning an impact that says in the pro world, global warming will lead to human extinction in the next 50 years.

The pro is winning an impact that demonstrates a violation of the Constitution on the con; the con is winning an impact that promises to save the lives of one million US citizens.

The pro is winning an impact that will lead to saving thousands of square miles of rainforests in South America; the con is winning an impact that will protect the wages of thousands of families.

